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The Religious Education Association

The life of an infant attracts more or less attention; during the years of development, agitation, unrest and uncertainty succeed; then quietly, often unconsciously, comes the beginning of life's real business. The fact that the history of the Religious Education Association has followed these lines indicates to many that it is an organism as well as an organization. Born at a convention called to consider the improvement of religious education, held in Chicago, February 10-12, 1903, the movement attracted at first widespread attention; it received immediate general public endorsement and, in a short time, gained over 1,000 members.

At the end of the first year there was held in Philadelphia a convention lasting three days, at which over one hundred addresses were made by men of national reputation, on the general theme, "The Bible in Practical Life." At this convention the organization began to correlate its activities; seventeen specific departments were equipped with officers and launched on missions of investigation and experiment in their special problems and activities. In February, 1905, a great inspirational convention was held in Boston; 130 eminent thinkers and leaders presented papers on "The Aims of Religious Education." One of the important accomplishments of this convention was also the formulation of a careful statement of the purpose of the organization. The opening paragraph of this statement reads as follows: "The threefold purpose of the Religious Education Association is: to inspire the educational forces of our country with the religious ideal; to inspire the religious forces of our country with the educational ideal; and to keep before the public mind the ideal of religious education, and the sense of its need and value." One year later a conference of officers and workers was held at Cleveland. All the lines of work were carefully considered and a definite business and promotional policy adopted.

The three great conventions have been outstanding features of the Association's work, but at the same time many other things, perhaps of even larger value, have been accomplished. The question is not infrequently heard, "What definite things is the Religious Education Association doing?" In answering this, we have to remember that definite and concrete results may be of least value. The purpose is not so much to do things, as to cause things to be done. This is an organization for pro-

motion, education, and inspiration. Its work must be measured not by what it does as an organization, but by the new and larger and better things that are being everywhere done because there is such an organization. The most valuable results are probably the indirect ones, such, for example, as the phenomenal extension of teacher-training classes; the development of the religious educational work of Christian associations, both in their own institutions and in colleges and universities; the larger educational work undertaken by young people's societies; the increase in number and improvement in quality of courses of study offered for the Sunday schools; the widespread and growing public interest and appreciation of the importance of religious education as seen in pulpit and platform utterances, in the daily newspapers, in religious and secular journals. Not the least valuable of the results is to be found in the many books on the different phases of religious education, books bearing such names as Harper, Coe, Hall, King, Pease, Haslitt, and many others, all members of the Religious Education Association.

It still remains to mention certain definite things that the Association has accomplished: First. The publication of three great volumes, which, by reason of their character and the authority of their contributors, have been almost universally recognized as the most important contributions to the literature of the subject. About 8,000 copies of these volumes have been put into circulation.

Second. Three issues of the new bimonthly journal, *Religious Education*, have been published. This has already become a valuable vehicle for the publication of the best that is being thought and done today in the many departments of religious education and for keeping the membership in touch with the Association's work.

Third. All of the seventeen departments into which the work of the Association is divided are officered and equipped for definite work; many of them have made important contributions through investigation and otherwise. They have held meetings, prepared bibliographies, suggested curricula, conducted special studies, and issued departmental literature. It would take too long to tell in detail of the separate activities of these departments, although it may be but just to say that the following departments have been able to accomplish most: Religious Art and Music; Teacher-training; Home; Christian Associations; Young People's Societies; and Sunday Schools.

Fourth. Local Guilds have been organized in many important centers; these guilds, applying the principles of the organization to the smaller community, have conducted conferences, maintained classes in biblical

study and in teacher-training, held courses of lectures, and pursued departmental investigations.

Fifth. Conferences with pastors, Sunday-school teachers, and educators have been held at a number of points.

Sixth. The great multitudes attending summer assemblies, denominational and similar conventions, have been reached and aroused to the consideration of the importance of religious education by means of special addresses given by leading thinkers and workers and by the distribution of the literature of the Association. Nearly one hundred summer assemblies were covered in this manner during the summer of 1906.

Seventh. State organizations are in process of formation for the promotion of religious education through conventions, conferences, etc.

Eighth. A permanent exhibit of literature, materials, and methods used in religious education has been installed at the executive office, 153 La Salle Street, Chicago, and is found to be of large value to all persons interested in the importance of religious education. The office is constantly used as a bureau of information on methods and principles of work.

Ninth. The program is in process of preparation, and general arrangements are being made, for the next great convention to be held in Rochester during the first week of February, 1907, probably from the fourth to the sixth. Each of the preceding conventions has witnessed a cumulative movement in interest and influence, and there is no reason to doubt but that the next one, being held in this accessible and important city, will be of even larger value than those that have preceded it.

Tenth. There has been a steady increase in usefulness, in influence, and in the promotion of the principles for which the Association was organized, by means of securing new members and building up a constituency.

The friends of the organization will, without doubt, be also interested to know the present condition of the Association's affairs. The indebtedness, which has embarrassed its activities for so long, has been reduced about one-half during the last six months. The payment of all pledges and the financial co-operation of those who are interested in the movement, will make it possible to cancel the other half within the next six months. Current expenses are all being paid; the membership is being maintained; a sustaining membership, consisting of those who pay \$10.00 per annum, is being built up. The definite activities of the Association mentioned above are being maintained and extended. The new office is properly equipped and the members are especially invited to make use of its facilities.

The present greatest need is that of continued enlarged and increased moral and financial support to enable the Association to continue its work of agitation, education, and promotion, through conferences and literature especially; to publish the valuable results of the careful investigations being made by the different departments, and to undertake many kinds of service greatly needed. There is a steady call on the executive office for advice and assistance by those who are meeting the many problems of religious education in their Sunday schools, colleges, universities, homes, etc. There are constantly opening opportunities of usefulness, of arousing and influencing public opinion, which it is impossible to enter on account of lack of funds.

It is, however, the judgment of those who know the movement best, that it has come to the period of its real usefulness; that, to a large degree, the uncertainties and experiments, inseparable from the organization of such a movement, are in the past, and its large field of definite and ever-widening service has been entered and is being occupied and cultivated:



THE BOY JOHN

—Murillo